

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01

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INFO DOD WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU IMMEDIATE

USSAG NAKHON PHANOM IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISORY SPOKESMAN ON MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR

REF: BANGKOK 8833

THAI FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN PRACHA KUNAKASEM GAVE A PRESS
CONFERENCE IN ENGLISH FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS ON THE AFTERNOON OF
MAY 15. THE FOLLOWING IS EXCERPTS OF A USIS TRANSCRIPT OF PRACHA'S
REMARKS:

BEGIN EXCERPT:

PRACHA: WELL, AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, WE WERE INFORMED THIS
MORNING BY THE U.S. MISSION HERE THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE MISSION
TO RECOVER THE SS MAYAGUEZ AND ALSO THE CREW HAD BEEN CONCLUDED.
THEY GOT THE SHIP BACK. THEY ALSO RESCUED THE CREW. I DON'T KNOW
WHETHER IT'S THE TOTAL NUMBER OF THE CREW, BUT AT LEAST THEY GOT
THE MAJORITY OF THEM...YES, AND THEN THEY SENT BACK THE CREW OF THE
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SS MAYAGUEZ THEY PUT THEM AND A THAI CREW OF FIVE INTO A THAI FISHING

BOAT AND SENT THEM ALONG TO THE DESTROYER.

Q. WERE THE FIVE THAIS PART OF THE AMERICAN MERCHANT SHIP'S CREW OR A FISHING CREW?

A. MORE LIKELY TO ME TO BE A FISHING CREW, ALTHOUGH IT COULD BE PART OF THE CREW. FOR ALL I KNOW. IT'S NOT CONFIRMED WHAT THEY WERE DOING THERE. BUT IN ADDITION TO THE AMERICAN CREW, THERE WERE APPARENTLY FIVE THAIS. THAIS RETURNED TO THE U.S. AUTHORITIES.

QM SO THEN, WE CAN TELL THE PRIME MINISTER THE WHOLE PURPOSE WAS REALLY TO RESCUE THE FIVE THAIS, THEN. AND THERE SHOULD BE NO HARD FEELINGS.

A. WELLLL, UHM, (PAUSE), TWO MORE THINGS. FIRST, OF COURSE, IS THE MARINES WHO CAME TO UTAPAO EARLY YESTERDAY MORNING AND THROUGHOUT THE MORNING. THERE WERE ABOUT 1150 IN ALL. OF THESE, ACCORDING TO THE WIRE SERVICES I'VE STUDIED, ABOUT 200 WERE SENT TO THE ISLAND OF TANG TO RESCUE THE CREW. OTHER UNITS WERE ALSO SENT TO OTHER SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT CARRIERS ON A STANDBY BASIS SO THE AMERICANS COULD.... BUT THERE ARE STILL A NUMBER LEFT IN UTAPAO. AS OF MID-DAY. BUT SINCE THE MISSION IS CONCLUDED, THE U.S. MISSION HAS ASSURED US THAT THESE PEOPLE WILL BE MOVED OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. PERHAPS PLANES FROM CLARK AIR BASE WILL COME SOON AND FETCH THEM BACK. IT IS THE HOPE OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT THAT SINCE THE MISSION IS CONCLUDED, HAS BEEN CONCLUDED, UHHH, THE REMNANTS OF THE MARINES LEFT IN THAI BASES WILL BE REMOVED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Q. DR. PRACHA, WHAT IS THE REACTION OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT TO THIS NOW. IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE UNITED STATE IS DISREGARDING THE WELFARE OR THE INTERESTS OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS ITS STATED WISHES IN THIS AFFAIR, EVEN AFTER IT'S BEEN CLEARLY INFORMED WHAT THE THAI WISHES WERE. WHAT IS THE REACTION TO THAT?

A. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE UMMM, AS THE PENTAGON ITSELF HAD ADMITTED, THE MARINES WERE USED TO RESCUE THE CREW. AND ALSO SOME PLANES FROM THAI BASES WERE ALSO USED, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY MILITARY SOURCES THAT U.S.A.F. PLANES FROM THAI BASES DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTUAL BOMBING AND SINKING OF THE THREE GUN BOATS. BUT I THINK THEY WERE USED IN CONVOY OR RECON, OR WHATEVER IT IS.
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SO I THINK, UMMM, THAT WENT CONTRARY TO WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD STATED TO BE HIS DESIRE, HIS WISH. SO, AS FAR AS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS CONCERNED, WE HAVE PREPARED A LINE OF ACTION ACCORDINGLY TO SELECT AS TO WHAT BEST WAY WE COULD THRASH OUT THESE REMAINING PROBLEMS WITH THE U.S. AUTHORITIES. THE PRIME MINISTER IS AT PRESENT AT NAKHON SAWAN. HE WILL BE BACK, I THINK, AT AROUND FIVE THIS AFTERNOON. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUR NOTES, AND MEMOS ARE ALREADY AWAITING HIM AT HIS DESK.

Q. IS THIS A CHOICE OF OPTIONS THAT YOU PRESENTED TO PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT, IS THAT RIGHT?

A. WELL, IN HIS CAPACITY AS ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER.

QM RATHER THAN ONE RECOMMENDATION?

A. THERE ARE OPTIONS FOR HIM TO SELECT. HE IS THE POLITICAL MASTER AT THESE THINGS. THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT, AS WELL AS THE ACTING HEAD OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. AND IT'S UP TO HIM TO CHOOSE WHATEVER WAY HE THINKS BEST.

Q. COULD YOU TELL US WHAT SOME OF THESE OPTIONS ARE?

A. I'M NOT...I'M AFRAID I'M NOT IN A POSITION TO REVEAL ANYTHING BEFORE WE MAKE A DECISION ON THIS THERE ARE MANY OPTIONS THAT WILL BE PRESENTED TO HIM.

Q. WELL, COULD YOU CHARACTERIZE FOR US THE WAY YOU SEE THIS ACTION ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?

A. IT WILL BE A DIPLOMATIC MOVE, UMMMM, AND WE HOPE TO ESTABLISH FUTURE UNDERSTANDING WITH THE UNITED STATES ON SUCH MATTERS.

Q. DR. PRACHA, WOULD YOU CALL THIS A VIOLATION OF THAI SOVEREIGNTY YOURSELF?

A. I SAID IT IS AN ACT THAT RUNS AGAINST THE EXPRESSED WISH OF THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND.

Q. IS IT YOUR IMPRESSION THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY HERE WAS NOT TOLD ABOUT THE ARRIVAL OF THIS, THESE MARINES UNTIL THEY WERE UNCLASSIFIED

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EITHER HERE OR JUST ABOUT....

A. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS TOLD BY THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES THAT HE (THE CHARGE) WAS NOT TOLD. HE (THE PM) TOOK HIS (THE CHARGE'S) WORD FOR IT.

Q. DO YOU BELIEVE IT?

A. (LONG PAUSE) I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE IT. NO REASON WHY HE... (LONG PAUSE).

Q. DR. PRACHA, YOU MUST OBSERVE THAT IT LOOKS AS THOUGH IN THIS PARTICULAR...INCIDENT, THE U.S. HAS REPEATEDLY DISREGARDED THE THAI GOVERNMENT POLICY...HOW THE BASES WERE USED. BY THE TIME IT SANK THE (PATROL BOATS?) NAVY PLANES WERE PART OF THE OTHER MISSION

AIRPLANES THAT WERE BEING FLOWN OUT (SIC). SECONDLY, THE GOVERNMENT SAID IT WOULD NOT WANT THE MARINES TO BE HERE. AND THE MARINES ARE HERE. THIRDLY, THEY WANTED MARINES NOT TO BE USED. AND MARINES ARE BEING USED. FOURTHLY, EVEN IF THERE WAS AN IMMEDIATE PULLOUT, THEY STILL REMAIN. ALTHOUGH THIS DOES NOT HAVE A DEADLINE, IT'S TAKEN SO LONG A TIME AND THE COMMUNICATION IS SO WELL DEVELOPED IN THESE DAYS THAT REALLY, IF THEY ARE WILLING TO ABIDE BY THE WISHES OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT....24 HOURS,

Q. RON NESSEN HIMSELF SAID YESTERDAY, "IMMEDIATELY IS IMMEDIATELY."

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A. YOUR STATMENT... THE WORDS YOU USE SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. NO MORE COMMENT ON THAT.

Q. WELL, MY POINT IS THAT DISREGARDING THE WISH OF ONE GOVERNMENT.. IS COULD WE JEOPARDIZE THE..SEIOUSLY AND BEING MADE CLEAR OVER NEWSPAPERS RADIO AND EVERYTHING. AND ONE AFTER ANOTHER.... IT SEEMS TO BE THE U.S. HAS NO WISH OR DESIRE AT ALL TO PAY ANY RESPECT TO THE THAI GOVERNMENT AND... MY QUESTION, THEREFORE, IS HOW SPECIFICALLY DO YOU THINK THIS CAN BE DONE. SECONDLY DIDN'T THAT JEOPARDIZE THAILAND'S PRESIGE IN THIS PARTICULAR REGION WHERE THAILAND SO DESPECRATELY

NEEDS ITW OWN PRESTIGE?

A. WELL, TO DEAL WITH YOUR FIRST POINT, ACCORDING TO THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES, IN THAILAND, THEY UNDERSTOOD, THEY TOLD THE FOREIGN OFFICE THAT AS FAR AS THEY KNOW NO PLANES FROM AN RTAF BASE WERE USED IN THE BOMBING AND SINKING OF THE CAMBODIAN SHIPS. AS FAR AS FURTHER ACTIONS FROM OUR SIDE IS CONCEREND, AS I'VE SAID, WE HAVE ALREADY LAID ON THE DESK OF THE PRIME MINISTER TO MAKE A DECISION ON IT. HE WILL PROBABLY DO SO THIS EVENING. HIS WAY IS TO UNCLASSIFIED

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MAKE QUICK DECISIONS.

Q. BUT ISN'T THIS SORT OF COMPOUNDING, I THINK THAT MR. MOROCOMBI MEANS THAT IT IS ONE THING TO DISREGARD THE WISHES OF AN ALLY AND IT'S ANOTHER TO DO IT, IT COMPOUNDS IT. WHEN THE ALLY IS ITSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF A DELICATE PERIOD IN ITS FORIGN RELATIONS DOES THAT AMOUNT TO SOME KIND OF BETRAYAL?

A. THE TIMING IS UNFORTUNATE PARTICULARLY WHITE FOEIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI IS DISCUSSING THE ZONE OF PEACE AND NEUTRALITY IN KUALA LUMPUR. I HOPE THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN.

Q. DR. PRACHA HAVE YOU HEARD THE SPEECH BY PREISIDENT FORD ABOUT A HALF HOUR AGO SAYIING THAT THE OPERATION WAS COMPLETE?

A. YEAH, I HEARD THAT, I SAW THE EXCERPT ON THE WIRE SERVICES. SO IN THAT CASE THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE MARINES TO REMAIN IN THAILAND ANY MORE. THEY COULD GO BACK TO THEIR HOME AND EAT ICE CREAM.

Q. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT THIS WAS DONE IN THIS WAY. DR. PRACHA IS THERE ANY...

A. YOU SHOULD RAISE THAT WITH MR. SCHLESINGER, NOT ME. NO ONE WAS INFORMED WHY IT WAS DONE.

Q. ARE THE MARINES STATIONED... ON THAI BASES?

A. NO.

1. DR. PRACHA, GIVEN THE CAPABILITY OF THE U.S. OUTPOSTS... THE NUMBER OF MARINES THAT ARE REFUSED (?) AT UTAPAO?

A. OH YES. DEFINITELY. THEY COULD HAVE LANDED SOMEWHERE ON AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER ANYWHERE.

Q. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT THE U.S. AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT USED THEM?

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A. THIS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE U.S. AUTHORITIES. I MEAN... DEVINE THEIR THOUGHTS. USUALLY THE AMERICANS ARE PRACTICAL PEOPLE. THEY WANT TO DO IT IN THE MOST CONVENIENT WAY. THE CHEAPEST WAY AND THE QUICKEST WAY. SO MAYBE GHEY THOUGH THAT'S...

Q. CONVENIENCE AND QUICKEST AND CHEAPEST...

A. AS FAR AS THEY ARE CONCERNED.

Q. YES, BUT THAT FLATLY CONTRADICTS THE WISH OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT... THEY SANK.... COMPLETE DISREGARD.

A. I HAVE NO COMMENT ON THE ... ITSELF. THE FACTS PROVE THEMSELVES.

Q. IS ONE OF THE OPTIONS, COULD THIS POSSIBLY (BE) SO FAR AS TO BE SOME KIND OF SUSPENSION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS? OR ISN'T THAT AN OPTION THAT YOU CONSIDER?

A. I DON'T BELIEVE WE WELL GO AS FAR AS THAT ("THAT" EMPHSIZED)

Q. HOW MANY OPTIONS HAVE YOU PRESENTED TO THE PRIME MINISTER?

A. QUITE A FEW.

Q. ONE. THREE?

A. I CANNOT DISCUSS ANYTHING ABOUT THAT. UNTIL THE PRIME MINISTER SEES THAT. HE HASN'T SEEN IT YET.

Q. (BLYSTONE) COULD ONE OF THESE OPTIONS POSSIBLY BE A SUMMARY REMOVAL OF ALL AMERICAN MILITARY FORECES FROM THAI BASES. SINCE THEY'RE NOT OF MUCH USE TO ANYBODY. IF THEY EVER WERE?

A. WELL, THERE ARE STILL QUITE A FEW LEFT AND THE LOGISTICS ALONE IS SOMETHING. PERHAPS THIS INCIDENT WILL CAUSE PUBLIC OPINION IN THAILAND TO MOVE TOWARD QUICKEN-
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ING THE PACE OF THE WITHDRAWAL.

Q. THE PRIME MINISTER, HAS HE DEALT WITH THIS AFFAIR AT ALL TODAY. OR HAS HE BEEN OUT OF TOWN ALL DAY:

A. HE WENT TO NAKHON SAWAN THIS MORNING. HE SHOULD BE BACK VERY SOON. IN A FEW HOURS.

Q. AND YOU WOULD EXPECT ACTION THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO LEARN OF VERY SHORTLY THEREAFTER?

A. UNLESS HE WANTED TO WISH TO CONSULT FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI FIRST, WHO'S ARRIVING LATE TOMORROW,

Q. WAS THAI GOVERNMENT INFORMED THAT THE U.S. WOULD USE MILITARY FORCE TO RESCUE THE SHIP?

A. WE WERE NOT INFORMED IN ADVANCE.

Q. WHERE YOU INFORMED AFTERWARDS?

A. IT WAS QUITE CLEAR, ONCE THEY MOVED THE MARINES, THEY INTENDED TO USE THE MARINES. OTHERWISE THEY WOULDN'T MOVE THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE.

Q. KHUKRIT TOLD NEWSMAN YESTERDAY HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY THAI MILITARY AUTHORITIES TUESDAY NIGHT. THAT DOESN'T SAY HE WAS CONSULTED. BUT WEREN'T AT LEAST THE MILITARY INFORMED IN ADVANCE, OR AT LEAST ASKED?

A. MY INFORMATION IS THAT THEY WERE NOT INFORMED, EITHER.

Q. DOES THAI GOVERNMENT REGARD THIS AS A BREACH OF CONTRACT?

A. WHAT CONTRACT? WHAT CONTRACT?

Q.

A. A BREACH OF FAITH.

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Q. ... UNDERSTAND UNDERSTANDING...

A. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION. ONLY THE PRIME MINISTER CAN. I THINK THAT AFTER CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. FOLLOWING THIS INCIDENT THE

SITUATION WILL BECOME CLEARER ON WHAT ADJUSTMENT WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE IN ORDER TO AVOID THIS SORT OF INCIDENT IN THE FUTURE.

Q. SUPPOSE THE AMERICANS DECIDED THAT THEY WANTED TO EVACUATE ALL THE AMERICANS FROM LAOS. WOULD THE SAME THAI DISPLEASURE EXTEND TO ANY MILITARY FORCES BEING USED TO WITHDRAW AMERICANS FROM LAOS?

A. THIS IS A HYPOTHETICAL CASE. BUT THEY COULD DO IT FROM GUAM OF OKINAWA OR AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER.

Q... FROM UDORN.

A. AGAIN. THIS IS A HYPOTHTICAL CASE. I WOULD HOPE THEY WOULD CONSULT US FIRST IF THEY WANT TO DO IT FROM UDORN.

Q. ANY CONSULTATIONS TODAY BY THE AMERICAN MISSION HERE THAT THEY FIRED...?

A. THEY DIDN'T (DID? TAPE HOPELESSLY UNCLEAR HERE) INFORM US I WAS TOLD IN ADVANCE. WHAT MASTERS TOLD ME THIS MORNING. WER ARE IN CLOSE TOUCH AS FAR AS THE REMOVAL OF THE MARINES, AS WE HAVE TOLD THEM THE FACT IS THAT WE WANT THEM OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IN FACT, TO QUOTE RON NESSEN, "IMMEDIATELY IS IMMEDIATELY." WHITEHOUSE

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